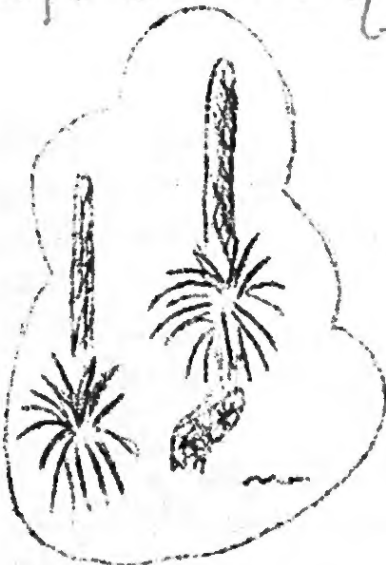


Geoff Wellman



BALLARAT FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB
EXCURSION/NEWS SHEET - MARCH 1976

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SECRETARY: Mr. P. Fry, 119 Stawell St.
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NEXT MEETING:

Friday 5th March, 1976
Central Technical School, 8pm
Speaker: Mr Greg Binns, who will
tell us about his recent trip
overseas.

NEXT EXCURSION:

AS IT IS BECONIA WEEKEND THERE IS
NO EXCURSION ORGANISED.

LAST MEETING:

6th February, 1976

Mr Alan Sonsee gave an interesting talk on Ferns, explaining why they
grew in certain places, for example, so many feet down a mine shaft.
This is to protect them from the wind and sun. He also brought some
fern specimens.

LAST EXCURSION:

The last excursion was to the Crossing, and only two cars turned up.
Although we didn't have all that many exciting sightings, we did enjoy
ourselves, even when it rained. We solved that by putting up beach
unbrellas. The question is, is it worth running these excursions when
only a handful of members are going to turn up? What do other members
think? Members' excuses last month were "February is too hot" but out
in the bush it was cool (Sunday was a cool day with a thunderstorm at
the end of it) and the bush was seen under a different light from the
threatening thunderstorm clouds. Even if you don't see anything im-
portant, isn't it enough just to have fun?

- Editor

The Editor hears from a reliable (?) source that the McKenzies had a
snake roaming about in their garage. After a fruitless search to lo-
cate it, the McKenzies supposed it had gone. On the arrival of vis-
itors, Mr McKenzie went to put on his shoes...One foot went in but the
other didn't....Guess who yelled.....Lucky he wasn't bitten.

DECEMBER EXCURSION

Under the expert leadership of Roger Thomas and Wally Coles, we had an interesting and enjoyable afternoon out at the Clunes swamps. Many birds were sighted, and some members were enthusiastic enough to wade about 100 yards or so out to the nesting areas. Martin Rotherham was the smartest; he took along a rubber raft. We went into Mt Beckworth for tea, and while there we noted several tiny ducks swimming about on a dam nearby.

DURING THE CHRISTMAS holidays, one of our members achieved a lifelong ambition. Esther McLenehan visited a niece in Canberra, and was delighted to find that her niece's husband had a kayak. So all together they went for a cruise down the Murrumbidgee River. Since Esther was twelve she has dreamed of travelling down a river in a canoe, and has now achieved it.

SHARK!!!

With all the publicity about sharks with the movie 'Jaws' members may be interested in this following article on sharks found around our coastal waters.

One of the commonest species is the blacktip shark. This is a 'small' shark, usually about 2 metres long. It is recognised by the black or dark brown tips on all fins. These sharks move in with the flooding tide in swarms. Although they are seeking food, there is no record of an attack on man by them. The grey nurse is a shark that has a reputation that far exceeds its record as a man-eater. It has been blamed for many attacks but is really a relatively non-aggressive and fairly harmless species. It has a fearsome array of long curved teeth, but these are essentially for grasping fish,

The larger whalers are probably the most dangerous sharks to be found around the reefs, because they are common and very fast swimmers. The common whaler is a powerful heavily built shark which grows to about 4 metres. This species has formidable serrated teeth, the upper ones being broadly triangular and erect, the lower ones narrower with wide bases. The bronze whaler grows to about 3 metres and in behaviour is similar to the common whaler, being prone to make high-speed rushes at divers and then turning aside at the very last moment.

The tiger sharks are the largest and most formidable shark to be encountered in reef waters. The largest Australian specimen, which was captured off Newcastle, N.S.W., measured 6 metres. Tiger sharks have a thick powerful body, a short pointed snout, and a long pointed tail. If aroused it can be a powerful and aggressive attacker, and most of the shark attacks on people in Australia are now thought to be

by this species. It is indiscriminating in what it swallows; items found inside captured tiger sharks include empty cans, dogs, lumps of coal, seabirds, and even a hand bag containing a ticking watch. Perhaps the most notorious of Australian sharks was the tiger shark in the aquarium at Coogee, N.S.W., which soon after its capture in 1935 disgorged a man's arm.

The largest and most powerful shark in Australian waters is the great white pointer. (The species which 'Jaws' was all about) This species may attain a length of 12 metres, but despite its bulk it is a fast-swimming shark that fortunately spends most of its time ranging the open oceans. It is rarely encountered in the shallower waters of the Great Barrier Reef, although it is found around rocky reefs in southern Australian waters.

- Australia's Wildlife Heritage,
Vol. 6, Ps 2529-32

TASMANIAN TIGER:

On the Tasmanian coat of arms are two Tasmanian Tigers, acting as supporters. For a number of years the Tasmanian State governments offered a bounty on the head of this animal, and between 1888 and 1909 no less than 2184 reward claims of the £1 bounty were paid. By the year 1919 this marsupial had become rare, and the search for the few survivors increased as they were worth a lot of money when caught alive for zoos.

The Tiger was given total protection in 1938, but it was a bit late. In recent years even the most sustained searches have failed to discover any live tigers. If from its position on the coat of arms the marsupial can be considered the official state emblem it at least remains as a warning to Tasmanians that much of their wildlife has only a fragile hold on life and needs sustained protection as well as professional management.

- Australia's Wildlife Heritage.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Isn't it a fair reminder to everybody everywhere?

QUESTION: What does a dog do if he loses his tail?

ANSWER: He goes to a retail store (of course)

EXECUTIVE NOTES.

Being Annual meeting time nominations have been received for all positions. If you have been nominated for any position please consider your decision carefully. Your assistance is needed to help run the Club.

The Club activities program has been completed and will be available soon.

Your help is needed to make Photoflora 76 a financial success. By so doing you will help to keep Club fees at the present low level.

Membership fees are now due and payable to the Treasurer who will be pleased to receive your contribution. Also the Newsletter is still being mailed out to members who request it. \$1.80 is the price for postage, as there are no Newsletters January or February. Pay this to the Editor.

This will probably be my last Newsletter for some time, if not the last one fullstop. I have two important school years ahead of me, and I would rather be able to concentrate fully on my studies, if possible. So a new Editor is required. Is there anybody available as it would be sad to see the Newsletter close, even if it is only temporary.

What do you get if you pour boiling water down a rabbit hole?
A hot cross bunny.

RUSSIAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS have unearthed the first ever evidence that cave men made music; and in an organised way. It appears that the giant hairy elephant, the mammoth, was their main source of equipment. A pre-historic six-piece ensemble made from mammoth's bones and painted with orange clay has been found near Chernigov in the northern Ukraine.

It is difficult to pin-point the exact age, but they are about 20,000 years old. The instruments include a bass drum made from the mammoth's skull, kettle drums made from the shoulder blade and hip, and xylophones from the lower jaw bones.

- JUKE, December 10, 1975.

EDWIN BEDGGOOD TAKE NOTE:

Did you hear about the plumbers who went into show business?
They're now tap dancers.

Well I just want everybody to know that I have really enjoyed working on this newsletter, and I hope the new Editor enjoys it as much as I have. See you in two years maybe.

Finally, my favorite riddle.

QUESTION: What is an ig?

ANSWER: An Eskimo's house without a loo.